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ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how teacher education follow-up studies can be designed and used to promote responsive teacher education programs. Using a recently completed study of alumni from an undergraduate teacher education program as a model, the paper presents substantive findings relevant both to the design of future teacher education follow-up studies and to the literature on the relationship between teacher preparation and professional practice. The paper also identifies methodological considerations and techniques designed to have the maximum impact on program review and planning. The paper presents results from both qualitative and quantitative analyses examining relationships among specific teacher education programs, early professional challenges, recommendations for curricular revision, perceived professional growth, and overall evaluation of the undergraduate program. The analyses examine variation among Early Childhood, Elementary, Secondary and Special Education majors with particular emphasis on comparing the most distinctive group, Secondary Education, with all other Teacher Education majors. One key aspect of the substantive findings in this research is the valuable feedback that graduates provided concerning challenges they encountered early in their professional careers and what recommendations they offered to better prepare future graduates to meet these challenges. (Contains 19 references.) (JB)

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Promoting Responsive Teacher Education Through Effective Follow-Up Studies

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, April 18-22, 1995

Introduction

This paper is intended to demonstrate how teacher education follow-up studies can be designed and utilized to promote responsive teacher education programs. Using a recently completed study of alumni from an undergraduate teacher education program as a model, this paper presents substantive findings relevant both to the design of future teacher education follow-up studies and to the literature on the relationship between teacher preparation and professional practice. The paper also identifies methodological considerations and techniques designed to achieve the maximum impact on program review and planning.

The paper presents results from both qualitative and quantitative analyses examining relationships among specific teacher education programs, early professional challenges, recommendations for curricular revision, perceived professional growth and overall evaluation of the undergraduate program. The analyses examine variation among Early Childhood, Elementary, Secondary and Special Education majors with particular emphasis on comparing the most distinctive group, Secondary Education, with all other Teacher Education majors.

One of the most important aspects of the substantive findings in this research is the valuable feedback graduates provided with respect to challenges they encountered early in their professional careers and, more importantly, what recommendations they offered to better prepare future graduates to meet these challenges. This research demonstrates that the perspective gained through experience is indeed one of the unique values of alumni research.

Review of the Literature

Follow-up Studies in Teacher Education

Increased use of follow-up studies in teacher education has been related to the accreditation process (Adams, 1987). Craig (1989) notes that the 1968 revision of the standards by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education may have initiated the emphasis on such follow-up studies, and the emphasis has been reinforced by the 1987 revised standards which call for follow-up evaluation as a criterion for compliance. The publication of An Illustrated Model for the Evaluation of Teacher Education Graduates (Sandefur, 1970) has been identified as a catalyst in generating interest among teacher educators in collecting data on their programs (Galluzzo & Craig, 1990).

While some have critiqued the Sandefur model (e.g., deVoss & Hawk, 1983) and others have documented limitations of many follow-up studies (e.g., Katz et al., 1981), such studies have potential value if they are incorporated in a comprehensive, integrated evaluation program (deVoss & Hawk, 1983; Murphy 1992). Teacher education follow-up studies hold significant potential for schools of education, students preparing to be teachers and the teaching profession. These studies, which may be required for accreditation, are also essential vehicles for monitoring program quality and ensuring that the professional preparation of teachers is responsive to the evolving needs of society (Ayers, 1988; Holste & Matthews, 1993). Further, by documenting and disseminating information about successful programs, teacher education follow-up studies offer a potential vehicle for influencing the public's perception of the teaching profession (Andrew & Schwab, 1993).

In order for teacher education follow-up studies to yield valuable information, it is essential that the survey instruments be designed to address critical issues in the teaching profession. Previous teacher education follow-up studies have identified one major critical issue, i.e., the importance of relating the world of ideas to the world of practice in teacher preparation programs. Relevant to this theme, specific issues addressed in this study include: the relationship of theory to practice, the practical challenge of classroom management, and the importance of addressing social-psychological issues in teacher education. A brief review of the literature on these topics follows.

Critical Issues in Teacher Preparation

Relationship of Theory to Practice. Research on the teacher education curriculum documents the importance of addressing the application of theory to practice in teacher preparation programs (Schubert, 1992). Graduates have identified clinical experiences as the most beneficial experience of their teacher preparation program (Holste & Matthews, 1993) and they have advocated more 'real life' experiences and the discussion of more 'real life' issues during the pre-service teacher education programs (Drummond, 1991). To provide the necessary conceptual perspective for translating theory into practice, Kuzmic (1994) proposes that some form of 'organizational literacy' be integrated into the teacher education curriculum; this literacy would involve understanding the bureaucratic and political context of schooling.

Classroom Management. Classroom management, an essential skill for a practicing teacher, offers a case example on the relationship between theory and practice. A teacher's competence in managing the classroom and in maintaining discipline is required if learning is to occur. However, while discipline is found to be a major problem for student teachers (Rancifer, 1992), it is too often absent in the teacher education curriculum. The following findings from a comprehensive study by Wesley & Vocke (1992) confirm the increasing intensity of the problem and the apparent absence of corresponding attention to discipline in teacher preparation programs. The public perceive a lack of discipline as one of the two most frequently mentioned problems facing local schools. Discipline problems have become more complex in recent years. Experienced teachers perceive discipline as an impediment to their delivering instruction. However, studying discipline is not given a high priority in the teacher education curriculum.

Social-Psychological Issues. Results from empirical studies and the informed judgment of critical reviewers document the urgent need to expand substantially the discussion of social and psychological issues that significantly impact today's students and consequently the teaching-learning process. To achieve this goal, the teacher education curriculum needs to reflect multicultural and global perspectives (Wahlstrom & Clarken, 1992) and the knowledge base of other disciplines - psychology, sociology, health and law - needs to be incorporated into the teacher preparation curriculum (Bucci and Reitzammer, 1992).

In his discussion of the need for a 'full-service vision' for schools, Dryfoos (1994) observes, "A measurable segment of our society is not going to make it without massive changes in the way they are educated, supported and cared for. Families and schools, the primary institutions that have traditionally carried the responsibilities for raising and teaching children, cannot fulfill their obligations without immediate and intensive transformation" (p. 1). Echoing a similar theme, Bucci and Reitzammer (1992) advocate that teacher preparation programs change student teacher attitudes about the role of the teacher and the teaching profession. Responsive teacher education programs should model collaborative relationships among human service professionals and encourage

student teachers to consider themselves as part of a team effort focusing on the academic, health and social development of the student.

Research Questions

This paper addresses the previously cited critical issues in teacher preparation programs in terms of the following research questions. These questions focus on the applied pre-professional experience of student teachers, challenges newly practicing teachers encounter in their early professional practice, and the perceived relationship between pre-professional preparation and professional challenges.

1. What value do newly practicing teachers place on the practical components of their teacher preparation program?

2. What challenges do newly practicing teachers encounter in their professional practice?

3. Do the professional challenges of newly practicing teachers vary by their program of study?

4. Is there a relationship between graduates' perception of professional growth achieved through the teacher education program and the extent to which they encounter challenges in their professional practice?

Research Hypotheses

The specific hypotheses tested in this research follow.

1. There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between graduates' evaluation of their practicum experience and their overall evaluation of the program.

2. A positive perception of professional growth achieved through the program together with satisfaction with courses and satisfying and challenging pre-professional teaching experiences will significantly predict graduates' overall evaluation of their teacher preparation program.

3. There will be statistically significant differences in the extent of professional challenges encountered by graduates of different teacher education programs.

4. There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between graduates' perception of professional growth achieved through the program and the extent to which they encounter certain challenges in their professional practice.

Data Source

Data for this paper are based on responses to a follow-up survey sent to 542 alumni who graduated from 1987 through 1991 with a B.A. degree from the School of Education in one of the following teacher education programs: Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Special Education, Early Childhood Education and Reading. Some fifty full-time faculty are engaged in these professional education programs which enroll

approximately 550 full-time undergraduate students and 200 full-time and 400 part-time graduate students. The School of Education is one of several professional schools in a large, private university with 591 full-time faculty, 9100 undergraduate students and a total enrollment of 14,700.

Data were obtained by means of a mailed survey sent during the 1992-1993 academic year. Follow-up data collection procedures included cover letters from the Dean, postage paid return envelopes with each survey mailing, a reminder post-card to the total population after the initial mailing, and two complete follow-up survey packages to all non-respondents. These follow-up procedures yielded a response rate of 60%.

The survey addressed three major areas: Graduates' Evaluation of their Undergraduate Program, Graduates' Post-Graduate Educational and Employment Experience, and Selected Background Information. The survey elicited extensive information on graduates' perceptions regarding how well their undergraduate education enhanced various intellectual and interpersonal skills; how well their college education prepared them for their professional life; what challenges they encountered in their early professional careers; and their perceptions regarding how undergraduate education might be improved to better prepare future graduates to meet these challenges.

Development of Scales

In an effort to form reliable measures with the existing data, the following scales were created: Pre-Professional Teaching Experience, Perceived Professional Growth, Satisfaction with Courses, and Teacher-Student Relationship Problems. The development of the scales involved conducting factor analyses to simplify the data, reveal the underlying constructs and identify correlated items that might be combined to form these scales. The items and response options for each of the scales are summarized in the following outline.

Pre -Professional Teaching Experience	**Perceived Professional Growth**
How challenging were your Pre-Practicum Field experiences and your Full-Practicum Field experiences? (5-point scale-'Not at All' to 'Extremely')	To what extent do you feel that your undergraduate program of studies and related experiences contributed to your professional growth and development in each of the following areas: Communication Skills, Critical Thinking, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Self-Understanding, and Values Awareness ?
How satisfied were you with the following as opportunities to relate theory to practice: your Pre-Practicum, your Full-Practicum, and your Student Teaching? (4-point scale -'Very Dissatisfied' to 'Very Satisfied')	(5-point scale -'Not at All' to 'Very Much')
Satisfaction with Courses	**Teacher-Student Relationship Problems**
How satisfied are you with your: overall School of Education Courses and Methods Courses? (4-point scale -'Very Dissatisfied' to 'Very Satisfied')	Please indicate the severity of the following problems for you during your first teaching assignment: Developing a Rapport with Students, Maintaining Discipline, and Motivating Students. (5-point scale-'Not at All' to 'Major')

Table 1 presents the components and reliability levels for each of the scales used in further analyses.

Table 1
Teacher Education and Experience Scales

Scale Name	*No. of Items*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*Reliability Coefficient*
Pre-Professional Teaching Experience	5	3.52	.368	.76
Perceived Professional Growth	6	4.00	.117	.86
Satisfaction with Courses	2	3.24	.050	.75
Teacher-Student Relationship Problem	3	2.05	.564	.70

The results presented in the following section are based on analyses with individual items and these scales.

Results

Research Hypothesis 1: There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between graduates' evaluation of their practicum experience and their overall evaluation of the program.

Quantitative Evaluation. Given the importance of field experience in teacher education, the alumni survey included several items asking graduates to evaluate the level of challenge and benefit associated with their pre-practicum and practicum teaching experiences. Chi Square analyses were conducted examining the relationship between graduates' evaluation of their pre-professional teaching experiences and their overall evaluation of the teacher education program. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Relationship between Graduates' Satisfaction with their Pre-Professional Teaching Experience and their Evaluation of the Teacher Education Program

		Evaluation of the Teacher Education Program			
Pre-Professional Teaching Experience		*Very Poorly to Fair*	*Well*	*Very Well*	*Total*
Pre-Practicum	*Dissatisfied*	56.3 %	40.6 %	3.1 %	100 % (N=32)
r=.41	*Satisfied*	25.8	45.4	28.8	100 % (N=163)
X^2= 49.79***	*Very Satisfied*	7.1	35.3	57.6	100 % (N=85)
Full-Practicum	*Dissatisfied*	70.0	20.0	10.0	100 % (N=10)
r=.45	*Satisfied*	59.6	36.5	3.8	100 % (N=52)
X^2 = 67.09***	*Very Satisfied*	13.6	43.7	42.7	100 % (N=213)

*** $p \leq .001$

As shown, results from Chi Square analyses reveal statistically significant relationships between students' pre-professional field experiences and their overall evaluation of their undergraduate education. As indicated by the correlations of .41 for the Pre-Practicum experience and .45 for the Practicum experience, there is a moderately strong tendency for those who are satisfied with their practicum experiences to express a positive evaluation of their undergraduate teacher preparation.

Qualitative Evaluation. Consistent with the quantitative results, qualitative data also give strong voice to the importance of intensive and meaningful practicum experiences as part of the undergraduate teacher education program. Alumni comments in this survey emphasize the importance of having extensive, responsible classroom experience with quality supervision during the undergraduate program. As indicated in the following comments, students applaud the early classroom experience provided through the Pre-Practicum experience. They also recommend increased opportunity for student teachers to assume full classroom leadership in their pre-professional teaching experiences. Further, these graduates suggest that certain types of student teaching experience be encouraged, specifically International Teaching and Inner City Teaching.

> The field practicum starting as early as sophomore year was of great assistance to me. This gives students an opportunity to experience many types of education settings and look at different teaching styles.
>
> I believe pre-practicum student teaching is one of the most beneficial components of teacher preparation. [Our college] should be commended for realizing this and beginning student teaching in the sophomore year.
>
> I am very satisfied with my educational experience . . . The professors and course work were interesting and challenging. One suggestion about the full-practicum . . . [is to have] student teachers assume full classroom leadership for one or two weeks at the end of the semester as this gives one a real sense of what teaching is about.
>
> I feel I would have benefited from more time in a full-practicum situation coupled with methods classroom work . . . My full-practicum was extremely beneficial, but it was over before I felt fully confident to teach independently.
>
> I recommend that students be given more teaching experience . . . I wish I had two full practicum experiences.
>
> I was given the opportunity to do my student teaching in England. This was a wonderful experience, and I hope that it is continued!
>
> I am very pleased with the education I received . . . I would like to see more student-teachers placed in urban settings.
>
> Since I worked in [an urban school system], I would say I had a unique experience . . . I do believe, although I realize it would be difficult, that [our] students should be trained more to be able to deal with the "real world" as [our institution], and college in general, is so far removed from the pain, poverty, and desperation many of our children, especially in the cities, experience everyday.

Hypothesis 2. A positive perception of professional growth achieved through the program together with satisfaction with courses and satisfying and challenging pre-professional teaching experiences will significantly predict graduates' overall evaluation of their teacher preparation program.

Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to test Hypothesis 2. Results from correlational analyses revealed statistically significant positive relationships between Satisfaction with Courses, Perceived Professional Growth through undergraduate education, a positive evaluation of Pre-Professional Teaching Experience and the overall Evaluation of Undergraduate Education. The correlation coefficients, significant at the .01 probability level, are .55, .37 and .44 respectively.

Regression analyses were then conducted to identify which variables best predicted students' overall evaluation of their undergraduate program. The population for the regression was limited to respondents who had complete data for the independent variables and who responded to the question which served as the dependent variable, "In your opinion, how well did your teacher preparation program prepare you for your present employment?" Regression results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Stepwise Regression Results Predicting Overall Evaluation of the Teacher Preparation Program from Satisfaction with Courses, Perceived Professional Growth and Satisfying and Challenging Pre-Professional Teaching

Independent Variables	*Bivariate r*	*Multiple r*	R^2	R^2 *change*	*Beta*	*F ratio*
Satisfaction with Courses	.55	.55	.30	.30	.55	120.08 ***
Pre-Professional Teaching Experience	.44	.61	.38	.08	.29	83.27 ***
Perceived Professional Growth	.37	.63	.40	.02	.15	59.91 ***

*** $p \leq .001$

As shown in Table 3, three variables contributed significantly to predicting students' overall evaluation of their teacher preparation program: Satisfaction with Courses, satisfying and challenging Pre-Professional Teaching Experience, and a positive perception of Professional Growth through undergraduate education. Among these three variables, Satisfaction with Courses is the strongest predictor explaining 30 percent of the variance in overall satisfaction. With this variable in the equation, Pre-Professional Teaching Experience explains an additional 8 percent and Perceived Professional Growth explains another 2 percent of the variance in overall evaluation. The relative influence of each of the independent variables is also reflected in the Beta coefficients which are .55, .29 and .15 respectively for Satisfaction with Courses, Pre-Professional Teaching Experience, and Perceived Professional Growth. Each Beta coefficient indicates the amount of change in the dependent variable for every standard unit change in the independent variable when it enters into the equation.

Professional Challenges

A primary purpose of this Alumni Survey was to learn more about graduates' early professional experiences; what challenges they encountered; how they dealt with these challenges; how well they think their undergraduate education prepared them for these challenges; and what changes they would recommend in the undergraduate curriculum to better prepare future graduates. In this regard, alumni of the teacher education programs were presented with a list of major work-related problems often mentioned by beginning teachers and were asked to indicate the severity of each problem for them during their first teaching assignment. Table 4 illustrates the extent to which all teacher education majors experienced these problems. As shown, the three top ranking problems are Teaching Students with Different Ability Levels, Maintaining Discipline and Mainstreaming with 40, 37 and 30 percent respectively reporting these as moderate or major problems in their early teaching experience.

Table 4
Rank Order of Major Work-Related Problems in First Teaching Assignment:
Percent Reporting 'Moderate' or 'Major Problems'

Problems	*Percent**	*Rank*
Teaching Students with Different Ability Levels	40.4 %	1
Maintaining Discipline	37.5	2
Mainstreaming	29.7	3
Evaluating Students' Performance	28.1	4
Evaluating Own Teaching	28.0	5
Relating to Students' Parents	23.1	6
Motivating Students	20.2	7
Planning Class Instruction	19.2	8
Relating to Administrators	14.2	9
Teaching Students with Different SES Background	13.1	10
Developing Rapport with Students	7.6	11

* The percents are based on numbers ranging between 269 and 289.

Hypothesis 3. There will be statistically significant differences in the extent of professional challenges encountered by graduates of different teacher education program.

Analyses were also conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the problems experienced by graduates of different teacher education programs. Results revealed most notable differences between Secondary Education and other Teacher Education majors. As shown in Table 5, a significantly higher percent of Secondary Education majors, compared with other Teacher Education majors, cited Motivating Students, Evaluating their Own Teaching, and Teaching Students with Different Socio-Economic Backgrounds as moderate or major problems in their first teaching assignment. Although the results are not statistically significant, a relatively higher percent of Secondary Education majors also cited Developing Rapport with Students, Relating to Administrators, Maintaining Discipline and Teaching Students with Different Ability Levels as major or moderate problems. In contrast, a substantially lower percent of Secondary Teachers cited Evaluating Student Performance as a moderate or major problem in their first teaching assignment.

Table 5
Relationship of New Teachers' Work-Related Problems to their Academic Major: Secondary Education vs. Other Teacher Education Majors

Percent Reporting 'Moderate' or 'Major Problem'

	Academic Major		
Problems	*Secondary Education*	*Other Teacher Education*	X^2
Motivating Students	33.3 %	19.7 %	10.51 **
Evaluating Own Teaching	47.4	28.4	8.25 *
Teaching Students with Different SES Background	29.4	11.9	7.83 *

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$
Note: Chi Square is based on the complete distribution of responses.

These results confirm the importance of providing Secondary Education majors with intensive preparation for relating to and managing students. The findings indicate that introducing strategies to motivate students, maintain discipline and develop rapport with students should form the primary core of Secondary Education methods courses.

Following the identification of work-related problems experienced in their early career, alumni were then asked to indicate which problems they think should have been better addressed in their undergraduate program. Graduates as a whole most frequently mentioned Teaching Students of Different Ability Levels, followed by Maintaining Discipline and Relating to Parents. Comparative analysis revealed that graduates from different teacher education majors varied to some extent in the ranking of these problems. Special Education majors were quite different from the group as a whole; they most frequently mentioned Relating to Parents, followed by Teaching Students of Different Ability Levels and Relating to Administrators as problems in need of greater attention in the curriculum. Secondary Education majors most frequently cited Maintaining Discipline followed by teaching Students of Different Ability Levels and Motivating Students.

Hypothesis 4. There will be a statistically significant negative relationship between graduates' perception of professional growth achieved through the program and the extent to which they encounter certain challenges in their professional practice.

Statistical analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis that perceived professional growth during undergraduate education would correlate negatively with the extent to which graduates experienced certain problems in their early professional careers. Analyses were based on individual items and focused on the three problems most frequently cited as moderate or major problems by the graduates - Teaching Students with Different Ability Levels, Maintaining Discipline and Mainstreaming. Perceived professional growth related to the following dimensions: Communication Skills, Critical Thinking, Decision Making, Factual Knowledge, Multi-Cultural Awareness, Problem Solving, Self-Understanding and Values Awareness.

Statistically significant correlation coefficients were found between six of the eight perceived professional growth components and two of the top ranking problems: Teaching Students of Different Ability Levels and Mainstreaming. The coefficients

ranged between -.12 and -.25 and were significant at the .01 probability level. Also, perceived growth in Problem Solving related significantly, at the .01 probability level, to each of the top three problems: Teaching Students with Different Ability Levels (-.25), Mainstreaming (-.22), and Maintaining Discipline (-.13). As indicated by the negative sign, the more a graduate perceived growth on these dimensions, the less likely he or she would have difficulty with these issues. Although these correlations are relatively weak, further research based on more sensitive measures may yield stronger results.

Recommendations for the Teacher Education Curriculum

In addition to evaluating their teacher preparation program and sharing their experiences during their early years in teaching, these graduates also offered many thoughtful recommendations for consideration in planning future teacher education programs. These recommendations reflect the insight gained from attempting to apply knowledge to practice and from coping with challenges encountered during this process. As reflected in the following comments, a prominent theme in these recommendations is the need for increased focus on the application of theory to practice.

More Application of Theory to Practice

> I was very satisfied with the preparation that [the] School of Education gave me. The Honors program was especially challenging. I encourage more practical courses for strategies and methods to implement in the classroom. Also incorporate more whole language based courses that balance basic skills. A course on student portfolio and professional development would also be helpful.
>
> I feel that [the] School of Education was very instrumental in my success as a teacher. My advice is that at all times, each professor relate the studies to real life classroom scenarios.
>
> [Have] more interaction and discussions with practicing teachers focusing on everyday common problems and practical situations. Classes tended to focus on facts and theory and not enough on real class situations. It also would have been helpful to discuss what was occurring in the student teaching/practicum situation and have guided problem solving.

More Courses in Behavior Management

> What I felt was really lacking was the knowledge of how to establish a classroom environment conducive to learning for all students. During my college preparation, I was never told/taught about the real classroom concerns that often arise before teaching/learning even begins, (i.e., discipline, motivational problems, difficult parents, etc.). My practica did not touch this either, since the class was already established under the head teacher.
>
> One improvement would be offering more, concrete methods of behavior management during full-time student teaching so that education majors could put theory into practice while still in college.

Maybe student teachers should have a class where they role play difficult classroom situations (confiscating a pocket knife, handling an angry parent, etc.). Maybe student teachers could meet once a week with each other and a supervisor to discuss actual "difficult situations" and how they were handled.

More Training in Classroom Organization

Paperwork and record-keeping are a big part of teaching. I think more exposure to this aspect of the field would be helpful to new teachers.

Suggestions for topics to be covered in seminars or classes: filling out report cards/evaluating students, working with administration, satisfying school system requirements, behavior management techniques, physical set-up of classrooms, current trends in education nationwide, and resources for finding a job.

More Training to Deal with Students' Social and Psychological Issues

A course on the social aspects of teaching-discipline, parent/teacher communication, teacher/teacher communications, teacher/student rapport, student cultural and economic differences would be extremely helpful.

An improvement would be to include information on social issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, alcohol & drug abuse, etc. that may be occurring in the student's families.

While I taught in an upper middle-class suburb . . . , I still found myself dealing with drugs, violence, etc. My SOE class work did not even scratch the surface of training teachers to deal with these and other issues.

I think the program can improve by focusing on the changing home environments and the students (i.e.: dysfunctional families, crack babies, alcoholic's children) and teach or prepare us how to deal with these children and their parents.

I personally am teaching in an inner-city, all minority school in a low income area. I know there definitely needs to be more understanding and knowledge of a child's home life. I can't teach my students until I know about it and am able to address their situations and adjust my teaching techniques to suit them.

Discussion

Results from this research document the value newly practicing teachers place on the quality of their pre-professional teaching experience and on the need to emphasize the application of theory to practice in the overall teacher education curriculum. Quantitative data document a positive, statistically significant relationship between graduates' evaluation of their practicum experiences and their overall evaluation of their education. Regression results reveal that Course Satisfaction, Pre-Professional Teaching Experience and Perceived Professional Growth account for 40 percent of the variance in graduates' overall evaluation of their teacher education program. Qualitative data reflect graduates' strong sentiment that pre-professional teaching experiences should be expanded,

intensified and diversified. These data are consistent with previous research results which document the importance of addressing the application of theory to practice (Schubert, 1992) and providing more 'real life' experience during the pre-service teacher education programs (Drummond, 1991).

Findings from the present study also identified the major challenges encountered by these newly practicing teachers. The data indicate that 'Teaching Students of Different Ability Levels' , 'Maintaining Discipline' and 'Mainstreaming' are the three most prevalent challenges encountered by all new teachers. Further analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the challenges encountered by graduates of different teacher education programs. In particular, a significantly higher percent of Secondary Education majors, compared with other Teacher Education majors, cited Motivating Students, Evaluating their Own Teaching, and Teaching Students with Different Socio-Economic Backgrounds as moderate or major problems in their first teaching assignment. These results confirm the need to strengthen the preparation of all teachers to deal with students of different ability levels and maintain discipline and to provide Secondary Education majors with intensive preparation for motivating students. The identification of discipline as a major challenge in need of increased attention in the teacher education curriculum supports the findings of previous research (Rancifer, 1992; Wesley & Vocke, 1992).

Regarding the relationship between the teacher preparation program and early professional experience, these results confirm a statistically significant, though weak, relationship between perception of professional growth achieved through the teacher preparation program and the extent to which newly practicing teachers encountered challenges in their relationships with students. Further research with more refined and robust measures of these phenomena may yield stronger relationships.

In summary, results from this research indicate that teacher education programs need to expand efforts to demonstrate to student teachers how knowledge and methods are applied effectively in professional practice. Extensive, intensive and diverse 'real life' pre-professional teaching experiences should form the core of the teacher preparation program. Further, the critical nature of the social-psychological issues confronting teachers suggests that the boundaries of the teacher education curriculum need to be expanded. Relevant knowledge and expertise from other academic disciplines and professions, including Social Work, Law and the Health professions, needs to be incorporated in the teacher education curriculum. Immersion in practical experience, multi-disciplinary learning and collaboration with other professionals will potentially promote the transformation required to prepare teachers to cope with the increasingly complex challenges they encounter in our nation's schools (Bucci & Reitzammer, 1992; Dryfoos, 1994).

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